

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, July 10, 2024.

The process to fill the Port Townsend City Council opening began in earnest last week, as four people have applied for the position vacated by Aislinn Palmer, who resigned in May. The applicants are Fred Obee, who worked as general manager for the Port Townsend *Leader* and subsequently served as executive director of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association; Heidi Haney who has worked in senior care and is currently the sommelier at Port Townsend Vineyards; Theo Howard, who works as an attorney with the Clallam-Jefferson County Pro Bono Lawyers Housing Justice Project and is also a KPTZ DJ; and Neil Nelson, a local contractor who is a member of the Port Townsend Planning Commission.

The now six-member council will meet in executive session on July 15 to select the finalists. Following this, public interview sessions are scheduled to take place from 3pm to 6pm on Tuesday July 23 at a location to be announced, but they may need to be changed in order to accommodate an applicant's previous travel plans. The public is part of the process, with the ability for citizens to express support of or opposition to any one of those selected.

The complete applications, along with an opportunity to comment on the applicants, are viewable on the city's web site, cityofpt.us (<https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil>). The council will select a finalist on August 5 and seat the new member for the first time at the August 12 business meeting. If it fails to reach a consensus, the decision will fall to the Jefferson Board of County Commissioners. If the commissioners fail to select, it will be up to the governor to decide. The person selected to fill the vacancy will serve until the end of 2025. Should they decide to run for a full term they would need to declare that intention by May 8 of next year.

Jefferson County is a blue bubble, one that votes Democratic in most competitive races. As a result, a plurality of local residents are alarmed about the effects of a second Trump term and are preparing for that possibility. The *Beacon* asked Jefferson County Commissioners District 1 candidates Heather Dudley-Nollette and Ben Thomas, both Democrats, what like-minded locals can do to insulate themselves from Trump's influence. Thomas said it was hard to say how Trump's proposed policies would affect us here. The Heritage Foundation's "Project 2025" plan suggests that more laws protecting rights would revert to whatever state protections are in place, in which case Washington state – and Jefferson County in particular – is well protected.

Thomas said the best path is to weave a stronger local fabric that will be resilient to the winds from the other Washington. This starts by building stronger neighborhoods and being willing to work with people who vote differently than ourselves. Thomas said, "First, we build resilience in our own community. We build strength through all forms of diversity. We refuse to live in fear."

Dudley-Nollette said that people must continue to lobby our state and federal legislators to represent the needs of rural communities and to vote for policies that strengthen rather than degrade civil liberties. This will become even more important if we have a federal government that is actively working to tear those things apart. For now, the people still have a voice and we should use it. She said, "Although we may believe different things than our neighbors, we want the same or similar things. Whomever you vote for, you need to always feel safe, validated, and respected."

This story is admittedly partisan. The *Beacon* would like to present the other side of this issue; those who favor Trump and want to talk about it should write to info@jeffcobeacon.com.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) recently published a report on the air emissions monitored near the Port Townsend Paper Corporation (PTPC) mill in Port Townsend WA. The study – called an Exposure Investigation (EI) – came at the request of the Washington Department of Health (DOH) following expressed interest from numerous residents and groups around Jefferson County. On Wednesday, July 10 – that’s today – ATSDR hosts a pair of public meetings to share information about the EI. The meetings will be held at the Marine Pope Building, 530 Water Street, Port Townsend, from 1pm to 3pm and from 4pm to 6pm.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. For this week’s stories and more go to <https://www.jeffcobeacon.com/>. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.